



MIDLAND SECTION

AMERICAN CHEMICAL SOCIETY

MIDLAND, MICHIGAN

February 29, 1956

IN REPLY PLEASE REFER TO

A Communication from the Executive Committee of the Midland Section of the American Chemical Society to the Tri-County College Study Committee.

The Executive Committee of the Midland Section of the American Chemical Society would like to call attention to certain questions which, in our judgement, merit the attention of the Tri-County College Study Committee or one of its subcommittees. We have before us the reports of the Needs Committee and the Objectives Committee, as well as a number of communications from the National Office of the American Chemical Society concerning educational policy.

1. Study of Alternative Solutions

The Report of the Needs Committee contains the paragraph:

"The committee has given no consideration to other ways of meeting the educational needs outlined in this report. Other ways may include the establishment or expansion of one or more such institutions within local metropolitan areas within the three counties, the establishment of branches of existing state institutions, the establishment of new state institutions, or other means. The Committee of 300 may wish to ask for studies of these other possibilities."

We would like to recommend that the Committee of 300 do just this -- i.e., ask for studies of such alternative possibilities.

It will be recalled that the Objectives Committee also did not study the possible alternative solutions to the educational needs of the area, but rather chose to assume, for the purpose of the study, that the form of the solution would involve the establishment of a new institution, under local control. It then directed the other subcommittees to

proceed upon this assumption, and to study the legal, financial, and other problems which would have to be solved in order to establish such an institution.

We are not criticizing this procedure. There were sound reasons for concentrating the efforts of the subcommittees along a single definite line, rather than dissipating them in a simultaneous consideration of all possible alternatives. The thorough study of this one approach to the problem, in all its aspects, which the Study Committee is carrying out, is in itself a worthy goal and a formidable task.

However, as this task is completed and this particular proposal takes on a more and more definite form, somebody will eventually have to study the various alternative possibilities.

Cooperation of U. of M. and M.S.U. on Graduate Program

We in the Midland Section of the A.C.S. are particularly aware of the extent to which local needs for advanced education can be met by cooperation with the existing state universities -- U. of M. and M.S.U. At the present time, in Midland, a considerable selection of post-graduate college courses are offered as an extension service by the U. of M. and M.S.U. In fact, it is possible to obtain a Master's degree in Chemistry, in Chemical Engineering, or in Business Administration, by taking advantage of these courses. This program was initiated through the cooperative effort of the Midland Section of the A.C.S., the American Institute of Chemical Engineers, the Educational Department of The Dow Chemical Company, and the Midland Public School Administration. Furthermore, this particular educational need was met without requiring any new capital investment whatsoever.

We do not mean to imply that any similar "cheap and easy" solution could be found for the much larger group of educational needs which the Tri-County Committee is studying. In some way or another, by one agency or another, a considerable amount of money will have to be spent -- for new educational plant as well as for operating expenses -- if the college-level needs of the children of this area are to be met. We do mean to imply that the persuasive force of any final recommendations which the Committee of 300 makes to the voters of this area will be largely vitiated if the Committee has not studied these alternative possibilities.

Recommendation

We therefore recommend: that the Tri-County College Study Committee take on, in addition to its already heavy task, the additional job of gathering information concerning alternative solutions to the recognized area needs; and that this additional study specifically include the solicitation, from the Presidents and/or Trustees of the U. of M. and M.S.U., of definite statements as to how much and what type of a collegiate program their institutions could supply to this area in response to a strong and united appeal from the citizens of the area.

2. Character, Curriculum, and Standards

(In presenting our second point, we shall assume that the best solution to the area need is the one being analyzed by the Tri-County Committee -- namely, the establishment of a new collegiate institution under local control.)

Our second point, which has to do with the character, curriculum, and standards of such a new institution, involves a highly controversial issue. It is an issue concerning which many injudicious and intemperate statements have been made in recent years -- by teachers and school administrators, by spokesmen for professional groups such as our own, and by other laymen. In this communication, we shall refrain from taking sides on the issue. Although some of us as individuals hold fairly definite opinions on the issue, we would be exceeding our authority if we were to advance these opinions while acting in the capacity of members of the Executive Committee of our A.C.S. Section. However, we do believe it to be our duty, as representatives of our Society, to remind the Tri-County Committee of the existence of the issue, and to recommend that it be given some careful consideration. (See Appendix A.)

The controversial issue in question stems from the fact (we believe it to be a fact) that there exists a basic difference of opinion on questions of educational policy between the faculties of Education and the faculties of the academic departments in American universities. This is not surprising. The School of Education in a university has a different type of function to fill from that of the Department

of Chemistry, or of History, or of English, or of Mathematics. The primary function of the School of Education is to train teachers and school administrators to staff the nation's elementary schools and high schools. Indirectly, the goal of this part of the university is the instruction of children through high school age. The educational policies and methods which are currently used in elementary schools and in collegiate Schools of Education have evolved through the years, just as practices in any other field have done, with some unsuccessful experiments tried and discarded, and other successful experiments tested and retained. The question of how well the elementary and high schools do their jobs is itself a controversial question and probably always will be. Probably no group of public servants are so continuously and freely exposed to criticism -- warranted and unwarranted -- by so many vociferous outsiders -- disgruntled parents, organized pressure groups, ax-grinders, crack-pots, and sincere public-minded citizens. Our Executive Committee has no intention of entering into this question here. Our point is simply this: the educational philosophy and teaching techniques which have been thus evolved in the Schools of Education are different from those which have concurrently evolved in the academic collegiate departments and which are used by these departments in training young men and women of college age in the fields of literature, history, mathematics, psychology, chemistry, etc.

This dichotomy has many ramifications when we enter the no-man's-land of a two-year Community College. To put it bluntly, which philosophy and which techniques are to prevail in such an institution?

Actually, we believe that there are good arguments on either side. Some of the functions proposed for the Tri-County College by the Objectives Committee and the Needs Committee might best be met by preserving a continuity of philosophy and technique between the high school and the Community College. Some other functions proposed by the subcommittees would probably best be achieved by introducing a sharp discontinuity in philosophy and technique such as the student would encounter if he went from high school to a regular 4-year college of high standing. For students who plan to enter a profession such as chemistry, or medicine, or engineering, or physics, we believe that the latter approach would be very much the better.

At any rate, there is a real problem here. As an illustration, the actual atmosphere and standards of such a school will depend very largely upon the choice of its first President. Here again there are several possibilities. It must be assumed that every effort will be made to secure a man of real stature in college teaching and administration. This would mean a department head, or a dean, or perhaps even a Vice-President or Assistant Chancellor of a reputable college. But this still involves significant alternatives. The man chosen might be an experienced, qualified head of the Education Department of a good university -- or he might be a department head or dean whose previous teaching experience was in one of the departments of Arts or Science. Either choice could lead to the creation of an excellent school -- but the two choices would probably lead to schools of distinctly different characters. The choice of the President is not, of course, the responsibility of the Tri-County Study Committee; that will be the responsibility of the Board of Trustees which is elected by the voters. However, it might well be within the province of the Study Committee to make a general recommendation on this point, since it will be so decisive in determining the character of the institution.

Even during the present planning stage, we would like to suggest that the Study Committee seek the advice of representative university administrators in the area of the principal collegiate disciplines (e.g., mathematics, science, history, language, etc.) and in professional schools (e.g., engineering, medicine, law, etc.) as well as the guidance of the Education Departments of the two state universities. Furthermore, there are a number of laymen in the Tri-County area who have had previous experience in college administration (at least up to the level of department head) in various academic or professional departments. It would be desirable, in our opinion, to consult some of these local people on the problem presented here.

It may be that the various local professional societies can lend assistance to the Study Committee on the pre-professional aspects of the proposed college. Certainly the Midland Section of the American Chemical Society stands ready, if our help is requested, to gather information on questions relevant to education in our own profession -- such as:

1. Who are the people among our membership who have had collegiate teaching experience at the assistant professor level or higher, or collegiate

February 29, 1956

administrative experience? Is there any consensus of opinion among these people concerning the organization, or philosophy, or curriculum, or staffing of a 2-year local college?

2. What type of training do the laboratory directors at Dow and Dow-Corning believe to be desirable for those students who plan to seek employment as laboratory technicians after only two years of post-high school study?
3. What requirements would be set by departments of Chemistry or Chemical Engineering in established universities [(a) in Michigan and (b) outside of Michigan] in order that credits obtained during a 2-year local program would be transferable to these universities?

If such studies would be helpful to the Tri-County Committee, it should feel free to call upon us.

Respectively submitted,

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February 29, 1956

Appendix A

Appendix A to Part 2. (Reasons for the inclusion of the controversial issue of Part 2 in this communication.)

There are several reasons why we believe we should bring up such a controversial issue, and recommend its study. In the first place, the issue is one to which the National Office of the American Chemical Society has devoted considerable attention, and concerning which the National Office has addressed several communications to the local sections. We believe that the positions taken by professional societies on questions of educational policy are factors which should be considered by a planning group such as the Tri-County Committee. Consequently, we are appending to our communication a copy of an official policy statement on education problems which was recently released by the National Office of the A.C.S., and two editorials on the problem which recently appeared in Chemical and Engineering News, a journal of the A.C.S. In addition, we are appending several statements of a somewhat less official character, including the report made to the Board of Directors of the American Chemical Society by Professor Joel Hildebrand (former Dean of the College of Arts and Sciences at the University of California, and former national President of the A.C.S.), acting in his capacity of A.C.S. representative to the White House Conference on Education. (His report does not necessarily represent in detail the official position of the A.C.S., but the National Office did see fit to distribute reprints of it to the local sections.)

In the second place, as officers of the local section, we believe that the issue in question would have to be faced eventually, even if we were to ignore the interest of the National A.C.S. in the problem. If a Tri-County College is to be made into a reality, it will be important to enlist the cooperation of local professional groups such as the A.C.S., the Bar Association, the American Medical Association, the Minister's Association, etc., in implementing the final recommendations of the Tri-County Committee. When that stage of the Tri-County College program arrives, we would be obliged, as officers of the A.C.S., to ask for some clarification of the position of the Tri-County Committee on this issue; in this communication, we are simply anticipating this inevitable future action, and providing the Tri-County College Committee a longer period of time in which to consider the problem.